

# Department of Commerce Growth Management Services Planner's Update

A monthly newsletter to share helpful information related to planning in Washington State

May 2012 – ISSUE 56

*Welcome to the Planner's Update, an electronic newsletter from the Department of Commerce, Growth Management Services. We send this newsletter monthly to share helpful information related to planning in Washington State.*

*Please feel free to send us any comments or ideas for how to make this newsletter more useful. You can also use the link below to provide additional names of planners who might like to subscribe.*

*Please also consider sharing this newsletter with planning commissioners.*



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[Regional Planners Forums](#)

[Short Course Schedule](#)

## QUICK LINKS

[www.commerce.wa.gov/growth](http://www.commerce.wa.gov/growth)

[www.washington-apa.org](http://www.washington-apa.org)

[www.smartgrowth.org](http://www.smartgrowth.org)

[www.planningpaw.org](http://www.planningpaw.org)

[www.mrsc.org](http://www.mrsc.org)

## 1. New Funding Matrix Will Help Search for Federal Funding Opportunities

Looking for funding for a new project in your community? HUD, DOT, EPA, and several other federal agencies have made available millions of dollars in funding to support the planning and implementation of projects that promote sustainable communities. Reconnecting America has compiled a [Federal Funding Matrix](#), which displays funding opportunities for states, cities, local governments and non-profit organizations, among others. Funding is available for a variety of uses, including community planning, implementation, site acquisition, business development,

affordable housing finance, technical assistance, research, and capital infrastructure investments.

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## **2. Planning-Related Bills Signed Into Law**

The 2012 Legislature passed a number of bills on planning-related issues. As we do every year, Growth Management Services tracked these bills throughout the session. A final list of bills that were signed into law by Governor Gregoire is now available on our website. [The Growth Management Bill Review List](#) provides a brief summary of each bill, organized by topic. For more information on individual bills, go to the Washington State Legislature website (<http://www.leg.wa.gov/pages/home.aspx>) and type in the bill number.

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## **3. Improvements to Growth Management Services Website**

Commerce has completed improvements to its Growth Management Services website: [www.commerce.wa.gov/growth](http://www.commerce.wa.gov/growth). Our customer service survey last year provided feedback that it was difficult to find what you were looking for on our website. The new improvements make it easier to navigate to the resources you need, and content of the pages on Growth Management Act topics has been updated with additional resources and examples.

These improvements are the first phase of Commerce's overall upgrades to its website. Later this year, we will have completed a more comprehensive upgrade, transitioning to a new web platform that will provide more search tools and other features so users can more easily find the resources they need. The look of the site will also be improved, with content oriented more toward how visitors are actually using the site.

If you have suggestions for how we can improve the site even more, [contact us to help serve you better](#).

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## **4. Housing Element Guidebook to be Updated**

The GMA housing element guidebook *Housing Your Community* is being updated. Growth Management Services staff, along with staff from the Commerce Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP), will be joining forces to give this important technical assistance document its first complete update since it was first published in 1993. Commerce NSP has been working with Washington communities hardest hit by the foreclosure crisis to stop the decline in home values, address impact of abandoned houses on neighborhoods and put foreclosed and abandoned properties back into productive use. Lessons learned from working with these communities will inform the guidebook update.

The updated housing guidebook will include all amendments to the housing planning statutes since 1993, reflect the demographic realities jurisdictions face as they update their comprehensive plans, and present ways local governments can more quickly recover from the current foreclosure crisis and avoid housing market failures in the future. The final product will be published on the web for ease in updating and to provide convenient access to

downloadable files and other helpful web resources. We plan on having the guidebook ready in early 2013.

Commerce wants to ensure the final guidance meets the needs of Washington communities. As we are developing guidebook chapters, we will post drafts on the project web site for review and comment. We seek public input on an on-going basis. To receive regular updates on progress, sign up for our Listserv at the following link: [Commerce –GMS NSP-HousingGuidebook](#)

More information on the housing guidebook update is available on our project web site: <http://www.commerce.wa.gov/site/1394/default.aspx> or by contacting Ike Nwankwo at (360) 725-3056.

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## 5. Regulating Medical Marijuana

The Southwest Washington Planners Forum recently requested help from Commerce on how local governments can regulate medical marijuana facilities. Commerce arranged for a presentation on the topic at the Spring 2012 Southwest Washington Planners Forum. At that Forum, two top notch attorneys – Carol Morris of Morris Law, P.C. and W. Scott Snyder of Ogden Murphy Wallace, led a technical presentation/discussion on **History of State and Federal Regulation of Marijuana, and Local Regulatory Options.**

Their presentations included an outline of the history of marijuana regulation in the U.S., a review of federal case law, a history of the state's approach to medical marijuana and the current disconnect between state and federal laws.

Because so many cities/towns/counties in Washington currently have adopted moratoria and/or interim zoning ordinances on collective gardens and dispensaries, a segment of the presentation also discussed the procedures for adoption and termination of moratoria and interim zoning ordinances. Slides and related materials including a model ordinance are available at the [Growth Management Services](#) web page. For more information, contact Ike Nwankwo at (360) 725-3056.

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